Cake decorating 24

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

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ORBIS DE AGOSTINI GROUP

Happy anniversary

This pretty cake allows you to display your skill in making runouts, for they feature on the two collars of the cake, in the overlaid circles which complete the design, and on the cake top in the form of a wheelbarrow and a flower pot.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: 18cm (7in) round fruit cake • apricot glaze • 1.25kg marzipan • 875g royal icing • albumen solution for run icing • selection of food colourings • petal dust • coloured flower paste.

Equipment: 25cm (10in) round cake board • wax paper • acetate • nos. 0, 1 and 2 piping tubes • 90cm (1yd) ribbon or paper band for cake board • paintbrush • blossom cutter.

Main skills: piping runouts • piping linework • piping embroidery.

DIFFICULTY TIME SUITABILITY

This cake has a lovely fresh appearance, due in part to the subject matter and partly to the attractive choice of colours. The design incorporates runout collars on the cake board and on top of the cake, where they are interspersed with flower-decorated circular overlays.

The flower-filled wheelbarrow and plant pot are also formed from runouts. The upper runout collar is actually formed in six sections, making it easy to handle, but it appears to be in one piece because the gaps between the sections are filled with the circular overlays.

ADDING TINY BLOSSOMS

An abundance of flowers in various pastel shades tumbles from the wheelbarrow and flower pot, while more formal arrangements adorn the overlays and corresponding areas on the cake board. Piped linework adds interest to the side of the cake, and is also used where the top collar joins the cake. Picot edging, piped embroidery and shell piping are added to provide the finishing touches. The delicate shades of the flowers make this a very pretty cake, ideal for anniversaries or birthdays.

tip

RUNOUT ICING

When colouring runout icing, purchase paste colouring which is glycerine free in order to maintain the right consistency.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1 Covering the cake: Brush cake with apricot glaze and coat with marzipan. Cover with royal icing. Attach the cake to the board when icing is dry.

2 Making runouts: Using templates, make the six runout collar sections, six runout base collar sections, and six runout overlay circles.

3 Making the blossoms: Make the tiny blossoms in five pastel shades with a blossom cutter. Shape and leave to dry on a piece of sponge.

4 Piping the picot edge: When collar runouts are dry, delicately pipe the picot edging with a no. 0 tube.

5 Making the template: Measure the height and circumference of the cake and make the greaseproof paper template for the side. Fold the template into six sections and trace the pattern for the side linework on to it.

6 Piping the linework: Scribe the linework on to the side of the cake. Then, pipe a line with no. 2 tube, and then overpipe with a no. 1 tube.

7 Piping the inscription: Trace inscription and scribe on to cake. Pipe using a no. 1 tube and terracotta icing.

8 Adding the background: Use petal dust to colour background on cake top. Make runouts for the barrow and flower pot. Attach them to the cake top.

9 Floral decoration: Use small dots of icing to fix tiny sugarpaste blossoms to the barrow and plant pot. Pipe green leaves and stems among the blossoms.

10 Attaching base runouts: Pipe line on the back of a board collar section matching the pattern to side linework. Do the same for other base runouts. Use a no. 2 tube to pipe small shells between the base of the cake and runout section.

11 Adding flowers: Attach blossoms in gaps between runouts. Pipe leaves on side of cake and board with a no. 1 tube.

12 Attaching top collar: With a no. 2 tube, pipe a line of icing inside edge of top section. Place on cake in line with base runouts. Attach other sections in this way.

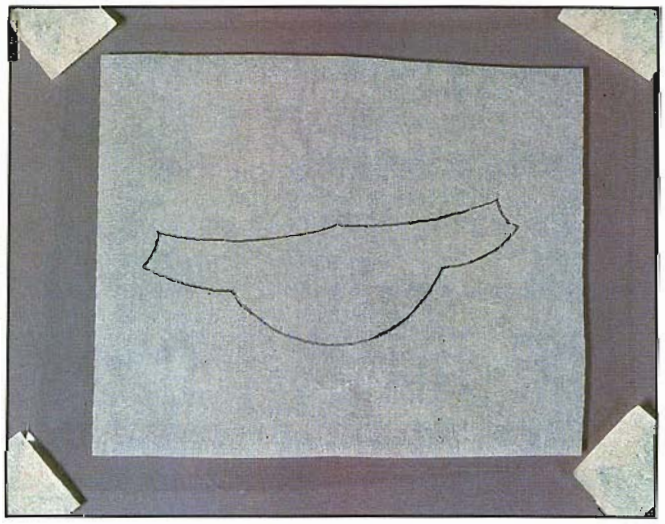
13 Securing the collar: Pipe a row of small shells, using a no. 2 tube, in the angle where the underside of the runout joins the cake side.

14 Positioning rings: Position overlays in the gaps between top runout sections and attach with dots of icing.

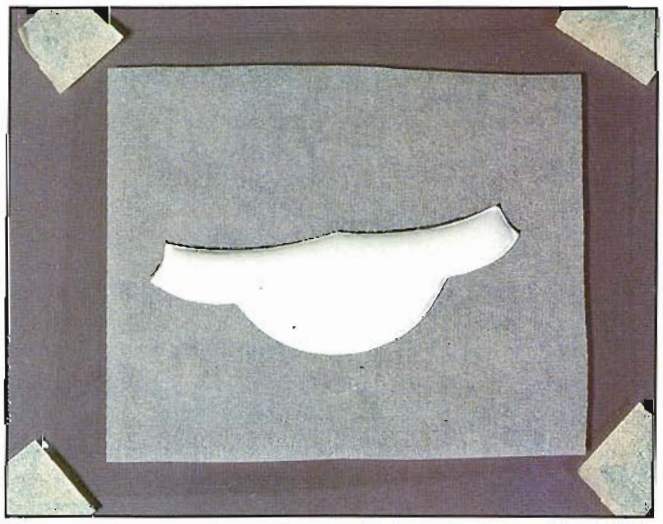
15 Attaching blossoms: Attach the tiny blossoms to the circular overlays.

16 Finishing touches: Pipe two rows of linework inside the top collar sections. Trim edge of the cake board.

FITTING THE TOP RUNOUT PIECES

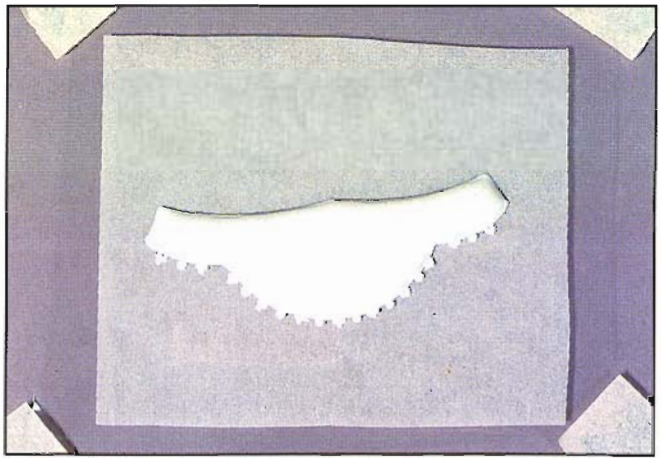


1 Tracing the templates: Place greaseproof paper on a flat surface and put a piece of acetate on top. Secure with masking tape. Trace the templates for the runout pieces to be positioned around the top of the cake.

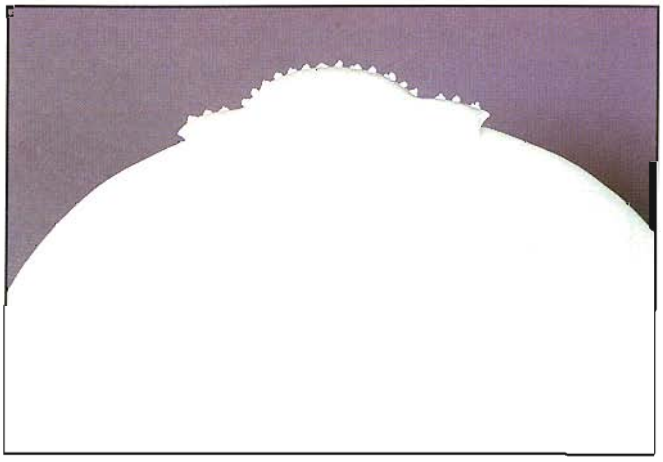


2 Making the runouts: Flood the six pieces for the top of the cake. The runouts for the top of the cake are shaped differently from those at the base which have a smoother inner line. Leave to dry.

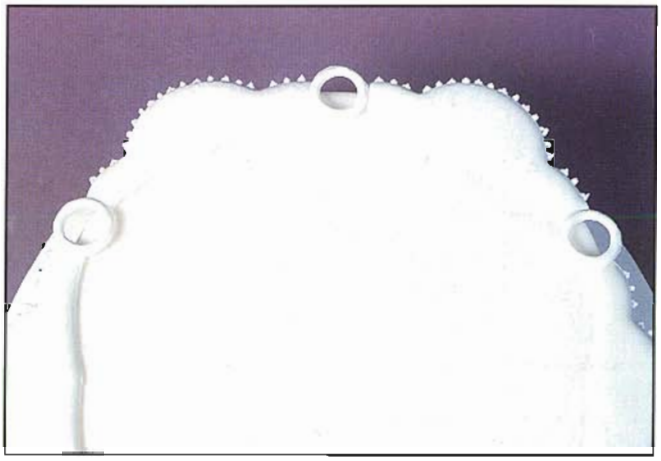
3 Making the rings: Using the template provided, flood the overlay rings and base collar sections. Make small blossoms and set aside to dry out.



4 Adding a picot edge: When the collar pieces are dry, add a tiny, delicate picot edge to each, making sure that you make contact with the collar itself. Use a no. 1 tube.

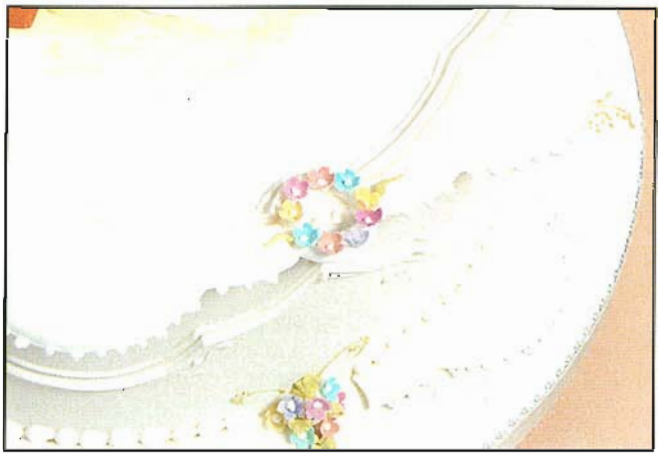


5 Positioning the runouts: Place a line of royal icing on the back of each runout with a no. 2 tube. Secure each to the cake, spacing them evenly in line with the base runouts.



6 Attaching the rings: Position the circular runouts so that they alternate with the collar sections, and attach them to the cake with small dots of royal icing.

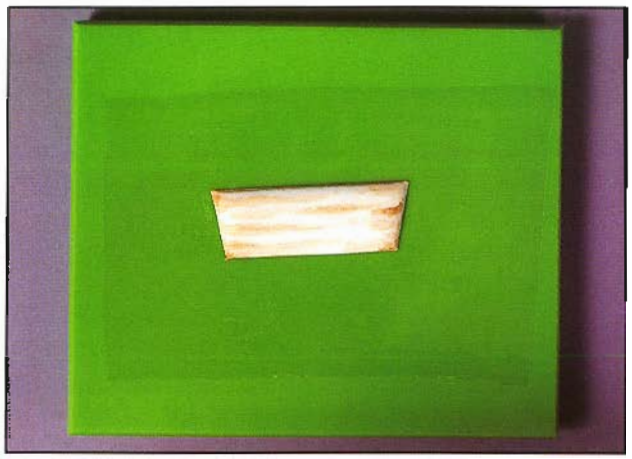
7 Piping the linework: Pipe two rows of linework inside the top runout section. Do the first line with a no. 2 tube and the second row just inside with a no. 1 tube.



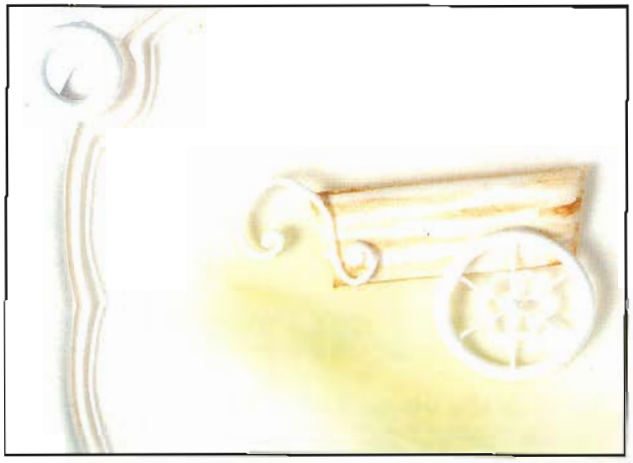
8 Attaching the blossoms: Attach some of the tiny blossoms to the circular runout overlays using a no. 1 piping tube and ivory royal icing.

MAKING THE WHEELBARROW

1 Making the runouts: Using the templates provided, run out the flower barrow, the wheel and the handle in ivory royal icing. You will need to flood the little flowerpot in terracotta icing.



2 Painting the details: Mix petal dust and cornflour to create a grassy green background for the barrow. Give the barrow a wooden effect by painting it a soft streaky brown, or shading it with petal dust.



3 Attaching the barrow: Place two bulbs of icing on to the back of the barrow. Attach it to the cake so that it is angled away from the cake at the top. With a no. 1 tube, attach the handle, plant pot and wheel. See the instructions below for the best way to do this.

4 Adding the blossoms: Using small dots of icing, fix tiny sugarpaste blossoms in the barrow and plant pot. Pipe tiny green leaves among the blossoms using a small piping bag cut to a 'V' at the end. Pipe in dots to suggest foliage and stems.

helpline — SUCCESSFUL RESULTS WITH RUNOUTS

Some of the runout pieces for this cake are rather delicate and fragile, and it is a good idea to flood more than one as they can break quite easily. It does not take long to run out a few extra.

The outlines of the barrow wheel should be piped on wax paper. Pipe the spokes, working from the centre to just over the edge of the inner circle. Pipe the inner scalloped line joining the spokes, then flood out the outer circle. Set aside and leave to dry.

Pipe the scrolled barrow handle on to wax paper using a no. 2 tube and ivory royal icing. Use small dots of icing to attach the barrow handle to the barrow. The handle should be positioned in such a way that it is supported by the body of the barrow. Pipe a bulb of icing on the back of the plant pot and place on the cake close to the barrow.

When attaching the blossoms, put a tiny dot of icing on the cake where you wish to place it. Add a tiny stamen with a no. 0 tube and lift the blossom with the tube to avoid crushing the blossom with your hand.

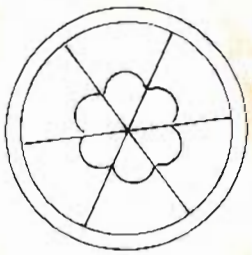
Happy anniversary

TEMPLATE COLLECTION 45

HOW TO USE YOUR TEMPLATES: Lay a sheet of tracing paper over the various templates and trace on to the paper. You may find it easier if you then cut the paper so that each template is separate. Using a scriber, trace the template shapes on to the rolled marzipan or sugarpaste.

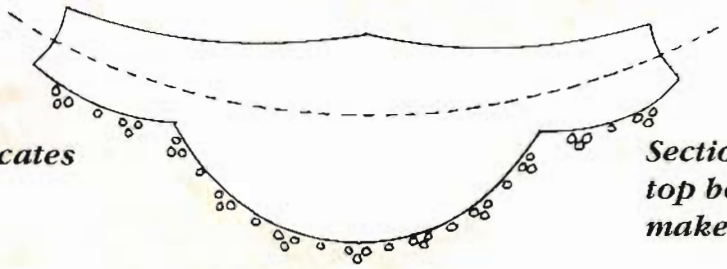
Inscription

Barrow wheel



Barrow handle

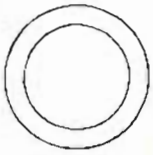
Flower barrow



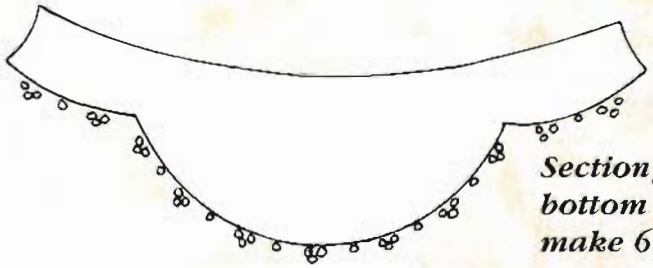
Broken line indicates cake edge

Section for top border: make 6

Patterns for side linework



Overlay: make 6



Section for bottom border: make 6

Plant pot

Piping cornelli work

This ornamental piping technique is easy to learn and adds interest and texture to any cake.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *20cm (8in) round sugarpasted cake • royal icing or buttercream • paste food colouring.*

Equipment: *nos. 00, 0, 1 and 2 piping tubes • greaseproof paper • small pair of scissors • pencil • masking tape.*

Main skills: *using templates • piping cornelli work • piping linework.*

DIFFICULTY TIME SUITABILITY

Filigree decoration derives its name from delicate ornamental work of twisted gold or silver. Just as in jewellery, in cake decoration it produces beautiful fragile designs and intricate lace patterns.

Cornelli work is really a particular type of filigree design. It can be used very effectively in conjunction with piping techniques such as line and border piping. A white cake covered entirely in black cornelli work would look startling, but really it is more effective when used in conjunction with other techniques and applied to the cake within designated areas.

CORNELLI WORK FOR BEGINNERS

It is piped freehand with a small tube held closely to the surface of the cake in a continuous movement of small curves piped in an irregular, crazy-paving pattern where it is impossible to find the start or finish.

As well as adding colour and interest to a royal-iced or sugarpasted cake, cornelli work can also hide flaws on the surface of a cake, so making it ideal for beginners. You do, however, need a steady hand and consistent piping pressure.

PRACTISING THE MOVEMENT

Although the design seems like random scribbles, it does have a structure to it, and it is probably best to practise before you start. You can pipe either in royal icing or buttercream, using a no. 1, 0 or 00 piping tube. Use freshly made royal icing and smooth it on to a flat surface with a palette knife to eliminate bubbles. Do not overbeat it.

As you pipe, you should move the tip of the bag around to create the continual looping effect, rather like a series of 'm's and 'w's. If you are piping a large area, keep an eye on the consistency of the icing.

Think carefully about colour combinations. Naturally, pastel shades suit weddings and christenings, but you can be adventurous and use strong colours – for example, chocolate- or coffee-flavoured buttercream. This is a particularly good idea on an everyday cake since it is not too time consuming, and the finished effect is very tempting. If you use buttercream on a buttercream cake, chill the cake first to create a firm surface.

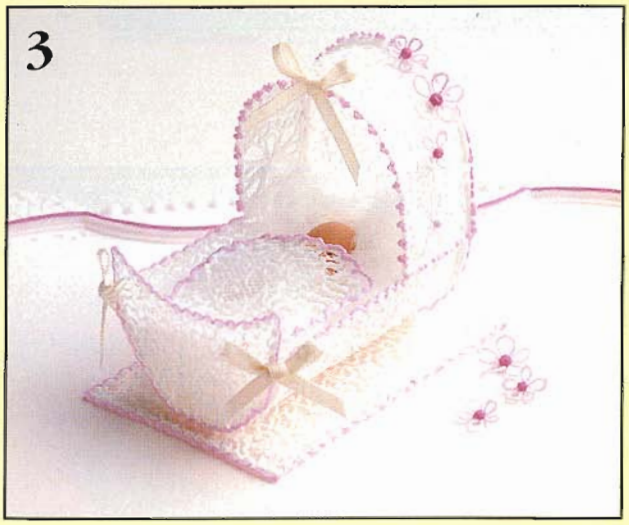
FREESTANDING DECORATIONS

When you have developed your skill, you can go on to produce lacework using patterns, and freestanding ornamental filigree decorations using templates and tulle.

IDEAS FOR CORNELLI WORK

This cake is covered in coffee-flavoured buttercream and has comb-scraped sides. It includes line and shell piping. Its asymmetrical look is achieved by piping chocolate buttercream along a straight line of greaseproof paper, with the cornelli work piped on to one half. You can add coffee based liqueur to the buttercream.

This sponge cake has a strawberry theme. The cake top relies on pink buttercream cornelli work which is quartered by straight lines of white buttercream. This is overpiped with a wavy line of chocolate piping. There is a circle of fine, nibbed nuts in the centre, and four marzipan strawberries placed on chocolate discs.



This is an example of a freestanding ornamental cradle, where the cornelli work has been piped over tulle using a template. The main sections are then curved over card and assembled with royal icing, to form a delicate freestanding ornament – a perfect cake-top decoration for a christening cake.

PROFESSIONAL SECRETS

Line piping and cornelli work

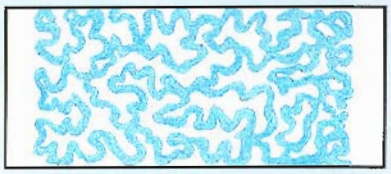
- A piped design on a cake, although essentially simple, can be very effective if you develop the look through overpiping.

- Put down the first layer of piping with a no. 2 piping tube. Remember that you can always correct any small mistakes with a damp paintbrush.

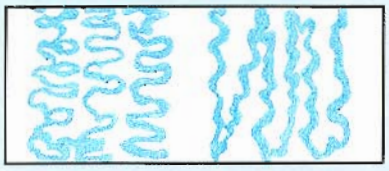
- When this is dry, overpipe the first line with a no. 1 piping tube in the same colour. Piping around the edge of the template again creates a beautifully graduated and sculptured look which will add grace to a cake.

- You can then use the smaller piping tube again to pipe a fine line inside the original design, adding still more interest.

- Make sure that when you add the cornelli work you understand the pattern of the work. Below, we provide an example of both the correct and incorrect way to pipe cornelli work.



Correct method

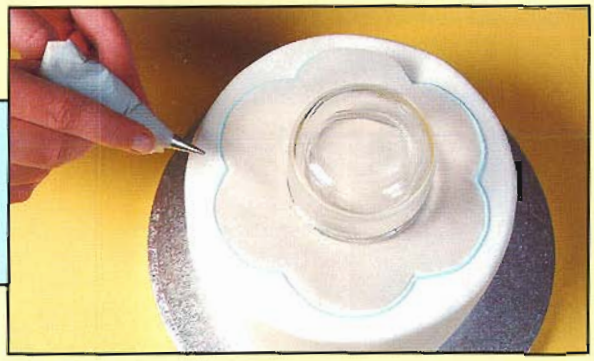


Incorrect method

BUILDING UP A DESIGN

1 Preparing the template: Trace the template provided on to greaseproof paper and cut out the petal shape. Hold the template in position at the centre of the cake with a small dish.

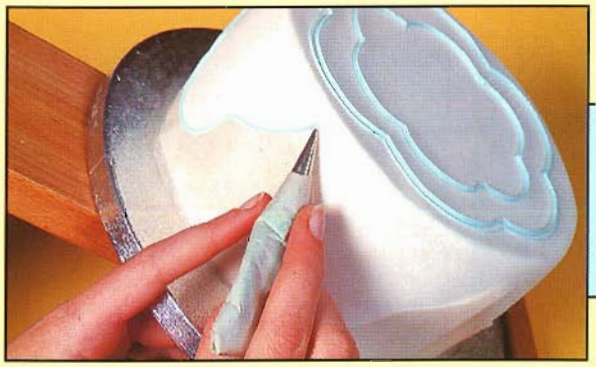
2 Piping around the template: With a steady hand, pipe around the template, using a no. 2 piping tube and pale blue icing. If you feel that you lack confidence, scribe around the template first.



3 Piping around the smaller template: Trace the smaller template on to greaseproof paper. Cut it out and place it centrally inside the larger petal shape on the cake, and then pipe around it.

4 Building up the linework: When you have finished piping the petal templates with a no. 2 tube, create a sculptured look by piping over the top of each with a no. 1 tube in the same colour.

5 Positioning the side template: Position the side template around the cake. Use masking tape to hold it in place, making sure that the tape only touches the paper and not the cake.



6 Piping the side template: Now pipe around the side template. You will find this easier to do if you can tilt the cake – a tilting turntable is ideal. Begin piping at a high point of the template.

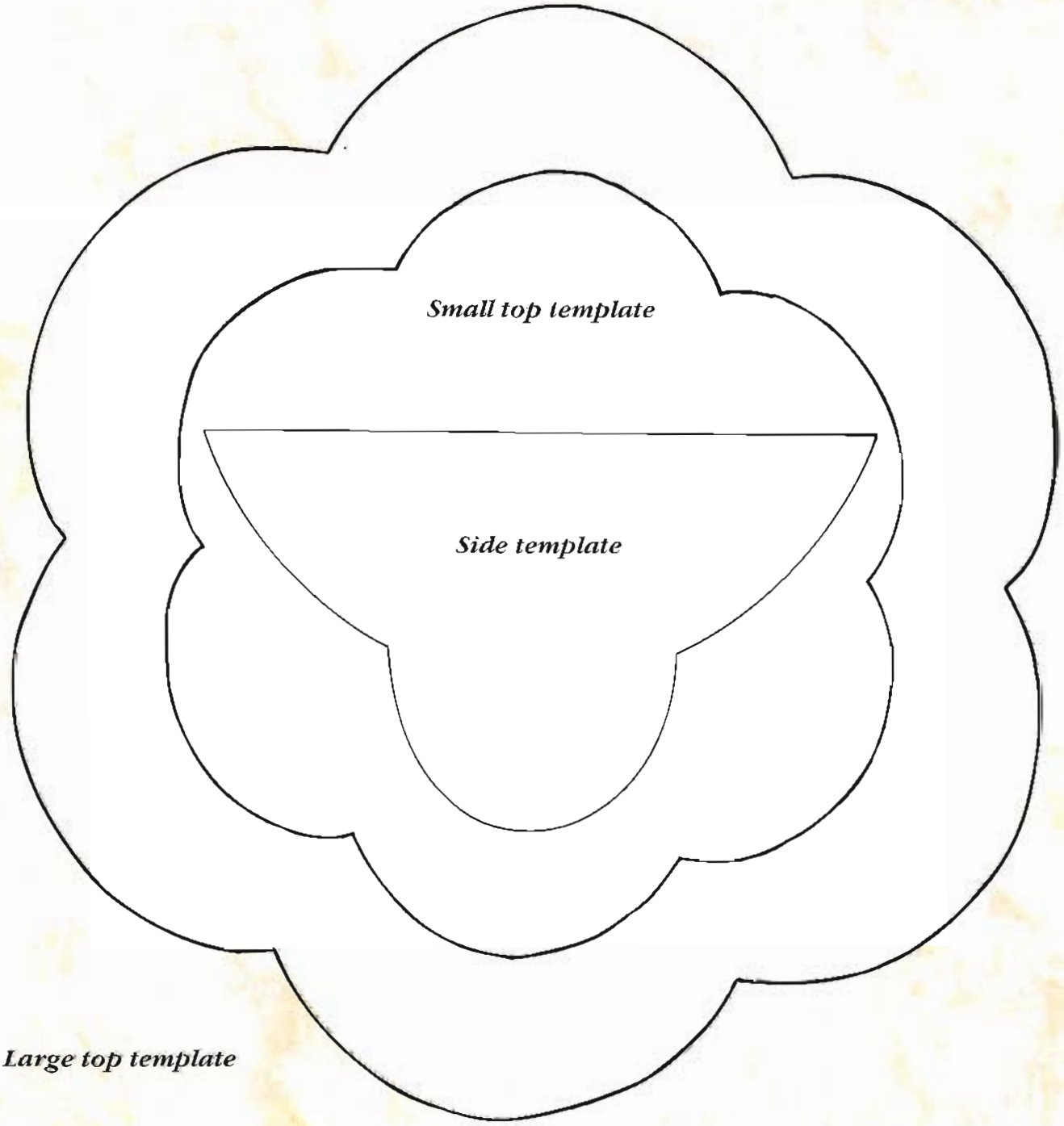
7 Beginning the cornelli work: Begin the cornelli work on top of the cake by piping in controlled, wavy lines which loop back on themselves. Use a no. 1 piping tube.

8 Piping the side of the cake: Now fill the side panels with cornelli work. This can be quite time-consuming, so check the consistency of the icing after a little while.

Piping cornelli work

TEMPLATE COLLECTION 46

HOW TO USE YOUR TEMPLATES: *Lay a sheet of tracing paper over the various templates and trace on to the paper. You may find it easier if you then cut the paper so that each template is separate. Using a scriber, trace the template shapes on to the rolled marzipan or sugarpaste.*



Chocolate clown

This cheerful clown is fun for a small child's birthday cake. Add a single candle to his hat, or press several into small balls of chocolate icing and secure them to the board.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *2 sponge cakes baked in 1 litre pudding bowls • 1 sponge cake baked in 300ml pudding bowl • 200g plain chocolate • 375g plain marzipan • 240g buttercream icing• 750g chocolate moulding icing • variety of food colourings• cornflour • 4 milk chocolate buttons• white and milk chocolate chips • 1 liquorice bootlace.*

Equipment: *rolling pin • 1 litre and 300ml heatproof pudding bowls• foil • sharp knife • paintbrushes • cake board, at least 5cm (2in) larger than the diameter of the cake • piping bag fitted with a writing tube.*

Main skills: *marzipan modelling • making chocolate moulding icing • piping buttercream.*

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓✓	⧗⧗	🍒

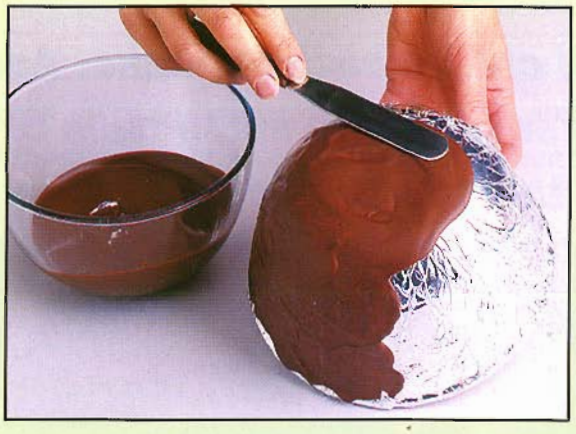
Children love chocolate, and this happy clown features an abundance of chocolate in his decoration. His baggy trousers are formed from a chocolate shell, and his colourful shirt is made from chocolate-flavoured moulding icing or sugarpaste, and adorned with delicious milk and white chocolate buttons. The rest of his accessories – hat, collar, bow-tie, features and boots – are formed from brightly coloured marzipan.

MAKING THE CLOWN'S BODY

Sponge cakes baked in pudding bowls are used to make the clown. His body is formed by two pudding bowl sponge cakes, sandwiched together with buttercream icing. They sit in the chocolate casing made by covering a large pudding bowl with silver foil, then coating it with a layer of melted chocolate. The head is formed from a cake made in a smaller bowl, and cut to shape and covered in peach marzipan.

He stands on a brightly coloured red cake board, but you can use your imagination and liven up a plainer cake board in a way which suits the cheerful clown – perhaps with coloured paper and small, coloured, chocolate sweets. You could also obtain some cake card, and cover it with royal icing, or even with hundreds and thousands. Whatever your choice, this clown is sure to delight any lively, young child!

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

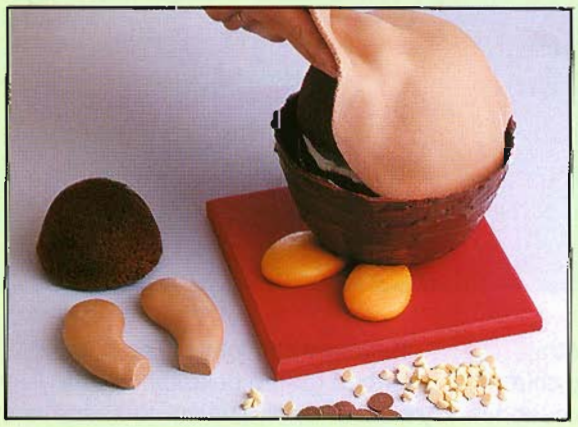


Preparing the chocolate case: *Cover the outside of the large pudding basin with foil. Tuck the ends inside and press creases flat. Melt plain chocolate in a bowl over hot water and spread over foil. Once it has set, carefully unwrap the foil from the inner edge of the bowl.*

1

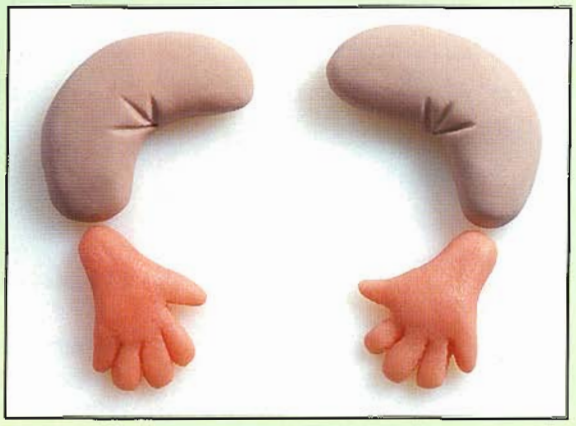
Making the chocolate case: *Twist the bowl and remove it completely from the foil. Taking great care, peel away the foil lining to leave an empty chocolate case. Be very gentle when handling the chocolate to ensure that it does not begin to melt.*

2



Covering the body: *Cut off one third of the chocolate moulding icing. Roll out the rest to a 25cm (10in) round. Lay over the top of the cake tucking edges inside chocolate casing. Fit icing to cake, cutting away excess and smoothing. Reserve a piece of chocolate moulding for hat.*

5



Making the arms and hands: *Divide remaining chocolate moulding icing in two for arms. Roll thick sausage shapes tapering at end. Flatten and bend to form arms. Cut off at thin end for cuffs. Mark elbow creases. Roll peach marzipan into two balls for hands. Cut slits and attach left hand to cuff.*

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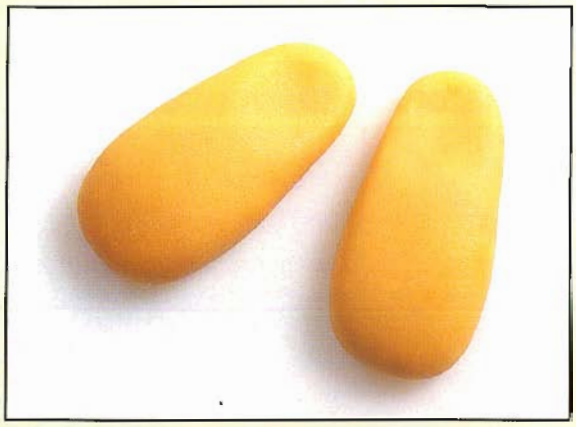
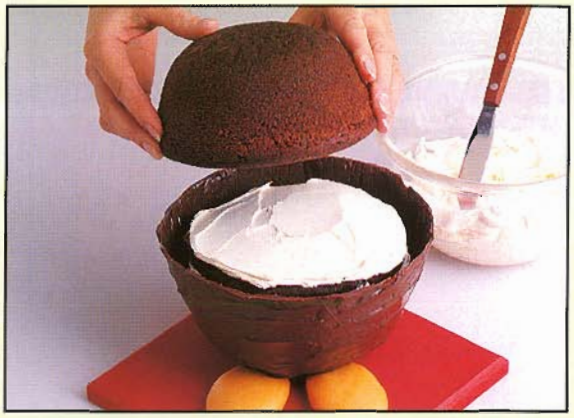


Making the boots: *Divide the marzipan in half. Colour one half peach and two thirds of the remaining half yellow. Divide the remaining third into three and colour one piece red, one blue, and leave one piece plain. Cut and shape the boots from two-thirds of the yellow marzipan.*

3



Forming the body: *Position the boots towards the front of one corner of the board. Spread the base of the large cake with buttercream and drop it carefully inside the chocolate casing. Spread the top of the cake with buttercream. Position the second large cake on top.*

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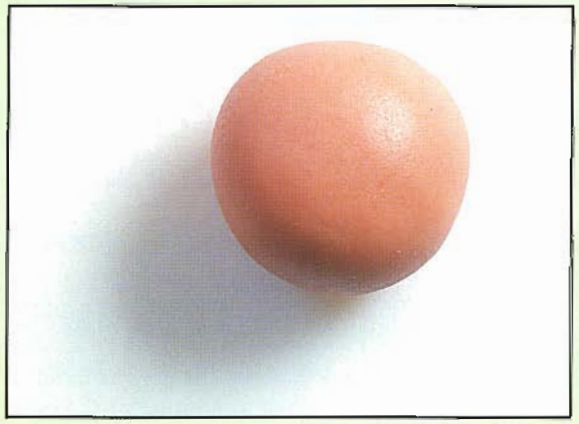
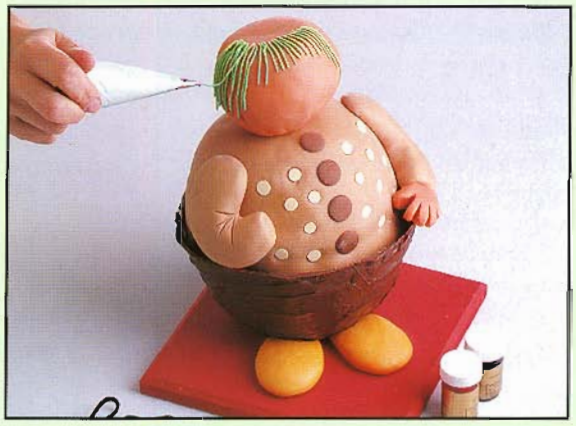


Making the head: *Roll out peach marzipan into a circle with an 18cm (7in) diameter. Form the small cake into a circular shape and wrap marzipan around it, smoothing the edges together underneath. Secure it to the cake with a small bulb of royal icing.*

7



Piping the head: *Colour the reserved buttercream green and place it in a piping bag fitted with a writing tube. Starting from the top of the head, pipe graduated vertical lines for the hair. Add milk and white chocolate buttons to the shirt as shown.*

8

PROFESSIONAL SECRETS

Making chocolate moulding icing

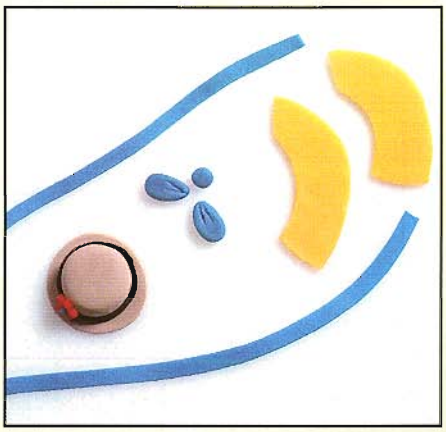
This is just as versatile as sugarpaste or ordinary moulding icing. We have used milk chocolate since the cake is for a child, but you may prefer to use dark or white chocolate.

Ingredients:

185g milk chocolate
2 tbsp liquid glucose
1 egg white
500g sifted icing sugar

Method:

- Break up the chocolate and place it in a small bowl over a saucepan of hot water.
- Add liquid glucose and leave until melted. Remove from heat. Let it stand for two minutes.
- Add the egg white and a little icing sugar. Beat with an electric mixer until smooth, adding the remaining icing.
- When the mixture is too stiff to beat, turn it on to a surface and knead in the remaining icing sugar to make a stiff paste.
- Wrap the paste in plastic wrap and keep it in a cool place for up to three days.
- For successful moulding, the icing must be the right consistency. If it is soft when rolled, add icing sugar. If it is too dry, sprinkle it with water.



Finishing touches: *Make the hat from chocolate moulding. Decorate it with a liquorice band and a small red and blue marzipan flower. Roll out two strips of marzipan for the blue braces. Cut the yellow collar, then form the blue bow tie.*

9

Making the features: *Form some red marzipan into a ball for the nose, and then cut a mouth. Roll out some plain marzipan and cut out the eyes. Press a milk chocolate chip into the centre of each eye. Add features to his face.*

10

Assembling the clown: *Secure braces over his shoulders so that ends overhang trousers. Press a milk chocolate chip into each end. Secure right hand clutching braces. Decorate shirt. Secure hat to head. Position collar and bow tie. Insert laces.*

11

Planning colour schemes

Careful choice of colour is a vital ingredient for success when decorating cakes. Bright colours suit novelty cakes, while pastels are a better choice for classic cakes. If in doubt, white with just a touch of colour always works well.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *royal icing.*

Equipment: *nos. 00, 0 and 1 piping tubes • greaseproof paper • pencil • scissors • scriber.*

Main skills: *piping extension work • making templates.*

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓ ✓		

It is important to choose appealing colours when decorating cakes. Some colours have traditional associations: a pink colour scheme for a cake for a baby girl's birth or christening, and blue for a boy. If you want to avoid stereotyping, however, pastel yellow is the safest choice. White, or white with touches of pastel, often in the form of sugarpaste flowers, are the traditional colours for wedding cakes. This is particularly important if the wedding cake is large or consists of several tiers, as too much strong colour can be overwhelming. (It can, however, be striking if handled properly.)

Because of their feminine associations, pastel colours and flowers are also generally used on cakes for women.

CAKES FOR MEN

Flowers are best avoided on cakes for men, unless you choose some of the more exotic and brightly coloured specimens, such as tiger lilies. Neutral colours are safer than pastels; consider beige, coffee, cream or plain white with neutral-coloured decorations. Add touches of colour with a plaque, or piped extension work, or an inscription. Novelty cakes for men are easier, as the subject usually dictates the colours – a football team, for example, or a car.

CAKES FOR CHILDREN

Children are generally very responsive to bright primary colours, and so a cake for a child will quite often feature bright reds, yellows and greens. Novelty cakes look fine decorated in bright colours, and children are not at all averse to bright red, blue or black icing – in fact, they positively beg for a piece of it! Adults, however, tend to be a bit more discriminating, and coloured icing should be handled with care if you don't want it to be off-putting. If you plan to use bright colours on anything other than a novelty cake, keep them to the decorations, such as flowers or piping.

CLASSIC CAKES

When deciding on the colours to use on a classic cake, look around you for inspiration. Fabrics and wallpapers can quite often suggest patterns or colour harmonies that you might like to recreate. Nature is another source – take a look at the flowers in your garden and see which colours work best together. As a general rule, it is best to be quite subtle in your colour interpretation and use pastel versions of your chosen colours.

COLOUR

1 Christmas cake: This cake illustrates a very effective use of complementary colours – red and green – which work well here because they are used with a light touch on a predominantly white cake. The festive note is highlighted by the addition of gold details.

2 Rainbow cake: Resembling an illustration from a children's book, this design features strong, bright colours which are unusual in cake decoration but nonetheless effective. The decoration is made from sugarpaste combined with brightly coloured marzipan.

5 Engagement cake: Blue can be a difficult colour for cake decoration – too strong a shade can be off-putting. But pastel blue, used against white, gives a delightfully fresh, porcelain-like feel. Here, pale blue touches are used all over the cake, including subtle shading behind the lovebirds.

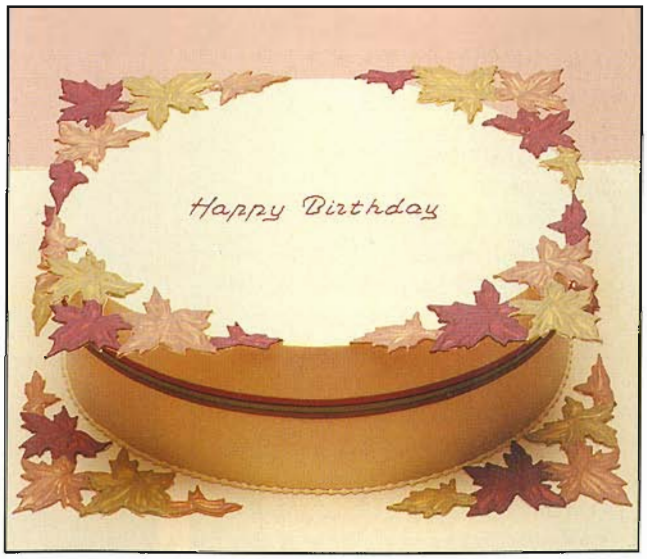
6 Wedding cake: Always err on the side of restraint when using colour in classic cakes. An elaborate creation such as this Elizabethan-style tiered wedding cake could only be created in white; the merest hint of colour would tip the balance between great style and going over the top.

IN CAKES

3 Clown cake: Primary and secondary colours feature in this bright, smiling clown, designed for child appeal. The colours are echoed in the sweets decorating the cake. Adults would probably avoid the red icing used for the nose and mouth – children will fight over it!

4 Pastel wedding cake: The elaborate white filigree work decorating this cake is beautifully set off by the subtle colour chosen for the background, somewhere between peach and café-au-lait. Colours for a wedding cake can often be co-ordinated with those of the bride's dress.

7 Rugby club cake: This unusual cake has obvious masculine appeal, and uses a neutral colour scheme of coffee, cream and biscuit tones very successfully. The icing is coloured so that the runout collar highlights the cake, but most of the intricate design is painted on with subtle tones of food colouring.



8 Autumn leaves cake: Here, neutral colours are used in a very different way to create a cake that would be equally suitable for a man or a woman with an autumn birthday. The runout collars, flooded with gold royal icing, cleverly give the effect of fallen leaves. Their deep autumnal tints are created with brush embroidery.

COMBINING COLOURS

PROFESSIONAL SECRETS

Choosing colours

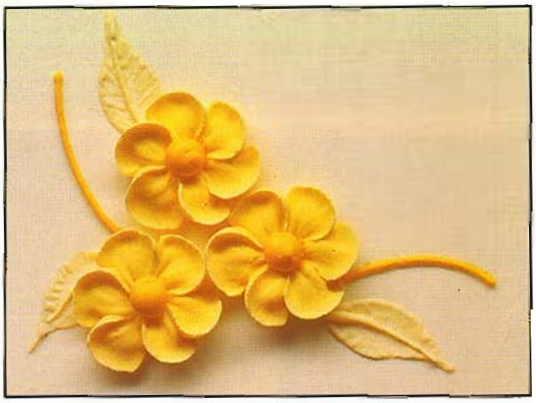
- To handle colour schemes for cake decorating with confidence, you need to have a basic knowledge of the colour spectrum, as illustrated by a colour wheel. This shows how mixing the three primary colours – red, blue and yellow – in different quantities and variations can give you a huge range of colours.

- Basically, by mixing two of the primaries together, you get a secondary colour – orange (from red and yellow), green (from blue and yellow), and violet (from blue and red). Complementary colours are those that lie opposite each other on the colour wheel and adjacent colours are those that lie next to each other.

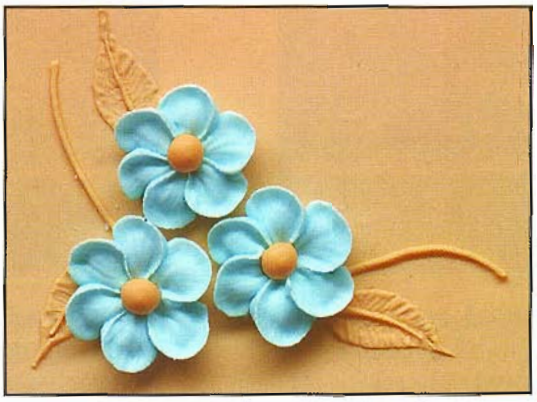
- Look at paint charts, home-decorating books, or art books, for examples of a colour wheel and more information on the colour spectrum.

- As the pictures here demonstrate, colours used in sugarcraft are usually fairly restrained, except for novelty and children's cakes. However, bright strong colours can be used successfully in small quantities on suitable cakes. If in doubt, put pale versions of your chosen colours together.

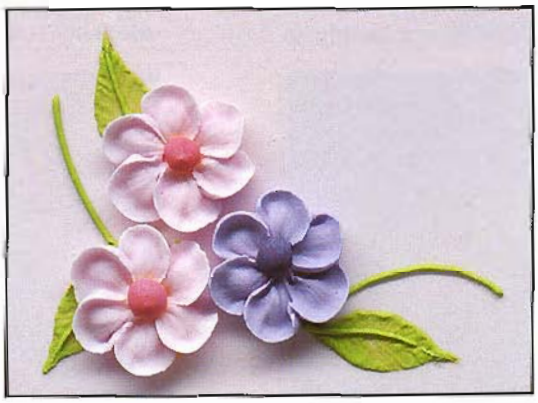
- White is also a colour, and it is probably the most popular choice for a background. It will always accentuate colours put with it – for a more subtle effect, use white with only a hint of colour.



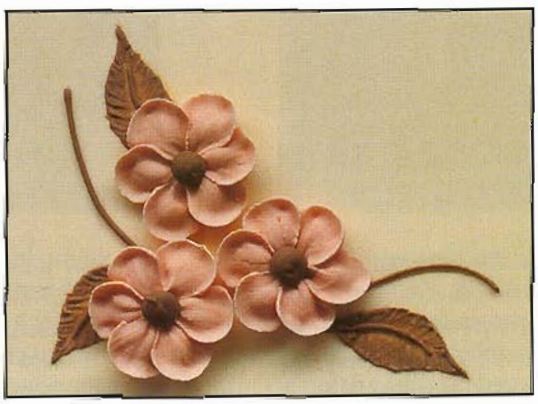
1 Monochromatic colours: This colour scheme uses shades of one colour. Coat the cake in the palest version of the colour, and add piping, scrolls, flowers and any other decorations in a medium tone. Save the strongest tone of the shade for fine piped linework and for any inscription.



2 Complementary colours: Colours opposite each other on the colour wheel – yellow and violet, for example – are called complementary colours. They not only contrast, but also enhance, each other. Avoid using two strong complementary shades together. Instead, consider using lighter shades of the same colours.



3 Harmonious colours: Colours next to each other on the colour wheel are called adjacent, or harmonious, colours. Use three to six adjacent colours for the best effect, keeping to pastel shades with the addition of only one or two deeper tones – particularly effective when modelling flowers.



4 Neutral colours: These are 'safe' colours, such as biscuit, cream, coffee and chocolate. Similar to monochromatic tones, they can be used in a more emphatic way and highlighted with touches of red, orange, blue, green, brown and black.

Lotus blossom

Sacred to the Buddhist religion, the lotus blossom is an exquisite flower with a striking appearance and ideally suited to lending an exotic air to an otherwise simply decorated cake.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: flower paste • ivory or cream cotton • green-covered 30g and 26g floristry wire • ivory, green and pink paste food colours • pale pink and lemon petal dust • white vegetable fat.

Equipment: • sweetcorn leaf veiner • ball tool • no. 4 round paintbrush • greaseproof paper • posy pick • scalpel or sharp-pointed knife • scissors • card.

Main skills: making stamens • modelling flower paste flowers.

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓ ✓	⧗ ⧗	

The lotus blossom is a very large flower, about 25cm (10in) in diameter. Scaled down to decorate a cake, it is still large, and so one flower with a leaf and a bud would be sufficient.

A member of the water lily family, the lotus blossom is sacred to the members of the Buddhist religion. In India, where it originates, each part of the flower is put to good use: its roots are eaten, its sap is used medicinally, the stamens make lamp wicks, and the striking seed heads are dried for use in flower arrangements.

The blossom here is coloured pink, but there are many different varieties of the plant, and you could adapt the colour to suit the colour scheme of your cake. Pale yellow, soft orange or a lilac-blue would all be attractive alternatives.

The centre of the lotus blossom has an unusual and striking appearance. The stamens which surround the large round centre of the flower are formed using strands of cotton. The centre itself is formed from ivory flower paste, flattened into a disc and textured, then lightly coloured with petal dust.

MAKING THE LEAVES

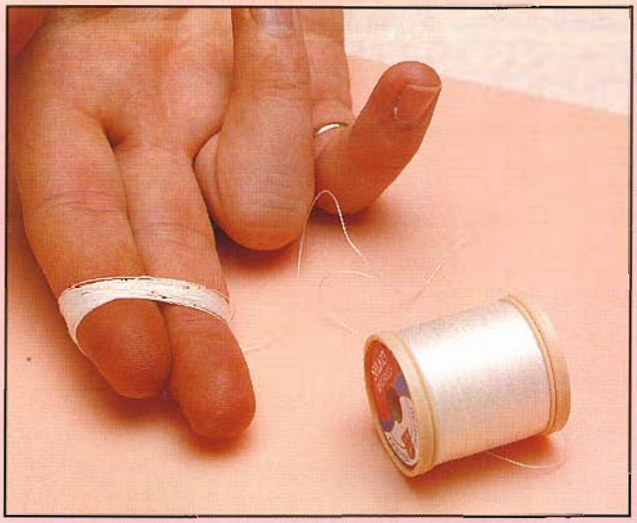
The leaves of the lotus blossom resemble those of the water lily, and they are formed from flower paste using the template or a plastic water lily leaf to provide the veined texture. The glossy effect is achieved using a coating of melted vegetable fat. The buds of the lotus blossom are important if you want to create an authentic look. They are relatively easy to make, being formed from a cone of coloured flower paste, to which three or four curved petals are applied to produce the characteristic plump appearance. Colour the flower paste using paste food colours, and use petal dust for the details.

MAKING THE LOTUS BLOSSOM

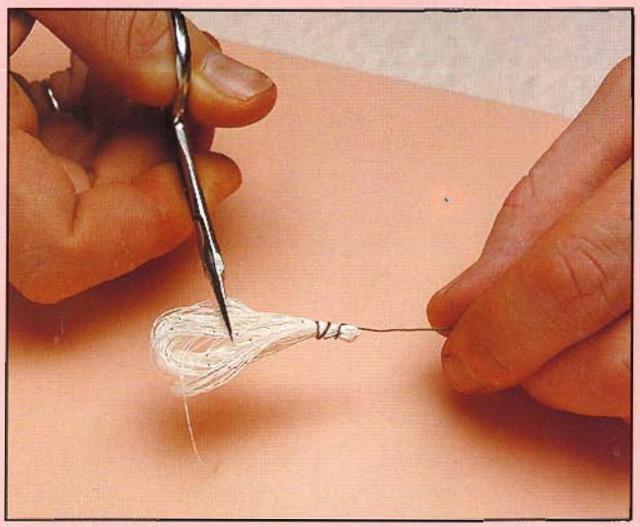
PROFESSIONAL SECRETS

Assembling the lotus

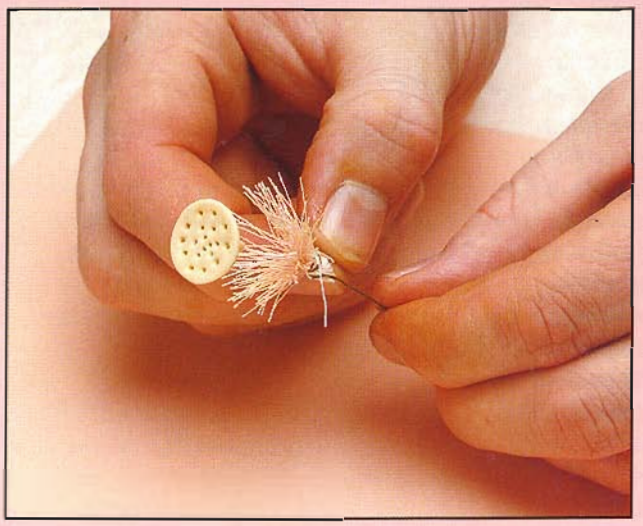
- For the flower, make 12 petals – eight large and four medium. For the bud, make a central cone and four small petals. Since they are large, make only one leaf.
- Use a no. 4 paintbrush to lightly colour the tips of the petals, the bud, and the centre of the stamens with pale pink petal dust.
- Make the flower by starting with the medium-sized petals. Work clockwise, attaching each one to the wired stamens, until all the petals are used. Tape firmly to hold them all together round the base.
- Finish the bud by placing a green calyx around the base of the flower.
- Tape the bud and flower together and position them on top of the cake with a posy pick so that the leaf lies flat, the flower is slightly raised, and the bud stands up.
- To make a leaf for the lotus blossom, colour some flower paste dark green. Roll out and cut out the leaf shape. Mark the veins as shown on the template with a sweetcorn veining tool. Using a paintbrush, lift the edges upwards at intervals to create the naturally wavy edge of a real leaf.
- Leave to dry, then brush lightly with melted vegetable fat to give the finished leaf a natural gloss.



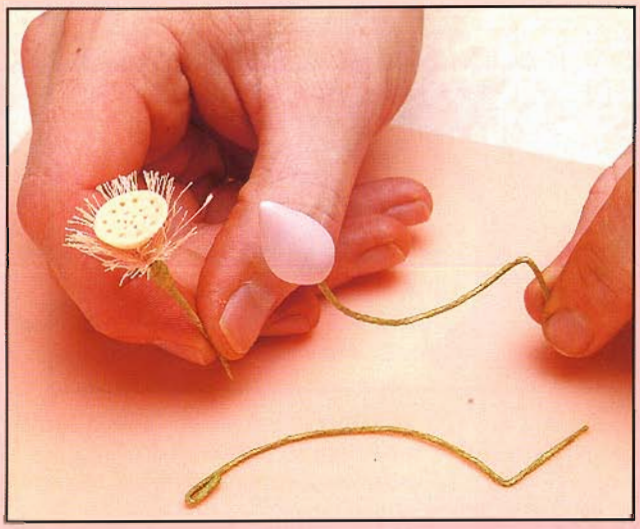
1 Forming the stamens: Colour a small piece of flower paste ivory, a small piece green, and the rest pink. Wind 3.5m (4yd) of ivory or cream cotton around your first two fingers. Don't wrap it too tightly, or you will be unable to remove it from your fingers.



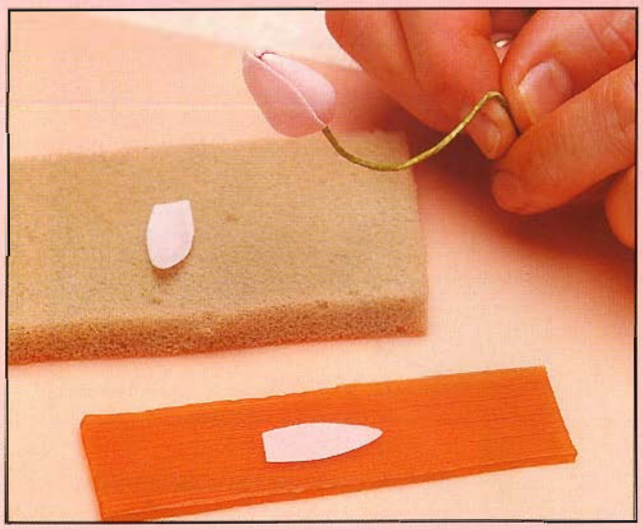
2 Cutting the cotton: Carefully roll the cotton loop off your fingers, and then pinch it securely in the middle. Wrap a piece of 30g green-covered wire tightly around one of the looped ends. Snip off the other looped end with a small sharp pair of scissors. Fan out the cotton strands and brush them with pale pink and lemon petal dust.



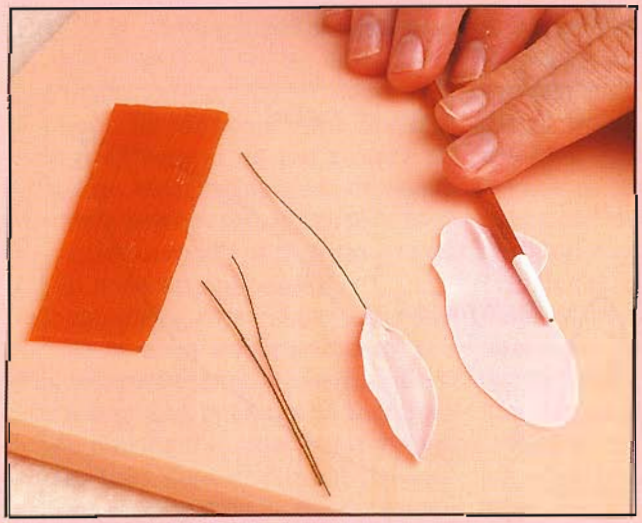
3 Making the centre: Make a cone of ivory flower paste, and flatten the large end into a disc shape. Texture the surface with your thumb, and then make holes in it with a small ball tool. Dip a piece of hooked 26g wire in egg white, and insert it in the back of the disc. Thread the wire through the centre of the stamens until the disc rests on top of them



4 Stem and bud: With the end of a paintbrush, tease out the stamens so they stick up around the disc. Tape the wire to form a stem. Make the bud by taping three pieces of green-covered 26g wire together and bend as shown. Mould pink flower paste into a bud shape. Insert hooked end of wire, dipped in egg white, into the base of the bud and mould paste firmly around the wire.



5 Bud petals: Roll out some pink flower paste and cut four small petals. Vein each one with a sweetcorn leaf veiner, and cup it slightly with a ball tool. Position the petals over the bud, slightly overlapping each other. To finish, mould a green calyx around the base.



6 Flower petals: Roll out a piece of pink flower paste, keeping one end thicker. Roll this end out with a paintbrush as shown to form a tube-shaped thickened centre. Insert a piece of hooked 30g wire dipped in egg white into this area. Mould the flower paste around the wire. Roll a paintbrush over the edges of the petals to soften them. Dry on a concave surface to give a cupped, finished shape.

DESIGN TOUCH

While the colour of many flowers can be varied to suit the colour scheme of your cake, it is also possible to vary their size. The lotus blossom is a large flower, and you could, if you wanted, make a life-size replica, or even several flowers, to use as a table centrepiece.

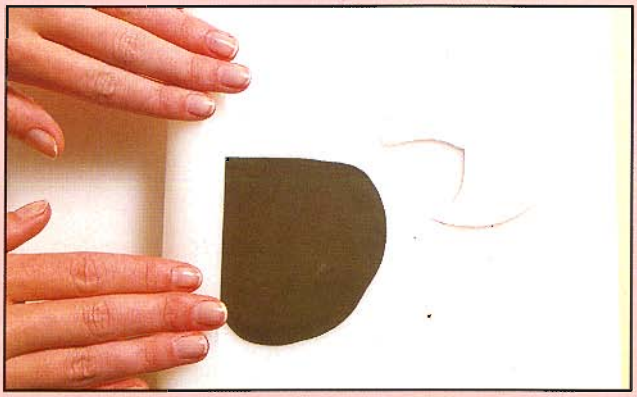
However, this size of flower would be inappropriate for use on a cake, as even a spray of flowers should take up no more than a third of the total surface.

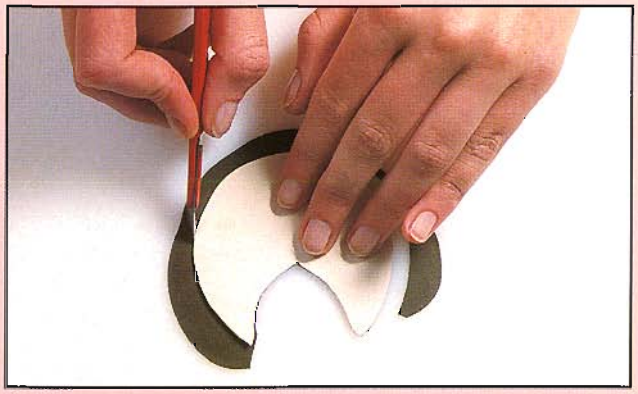
Using a flower too large as a cake decoration spoils the sense of proportion: the same is true when your replica of a flower is too small. The lotus blossom, for example, should not be smaller than 10cm (4in), or else all sense of its splendour is lost.

When putting flowers together in a spray, balance the sizes – keep the smaller flowers for the end or edges of the spray and place the larger ones near the centre or the top. Keep the size of the flowers in relation to each other on the same scale as they have in nature.

In general, however, try to avoid using large, exotic blooms such as the lotus blossom in a group or spray. Their impact is lost if they are not displayed on their own.

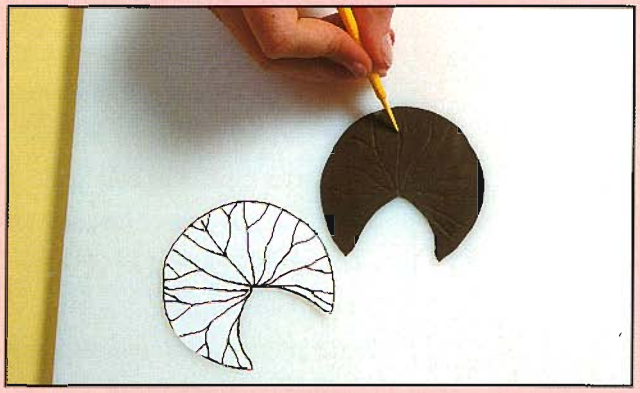
MAKING THE LOTUS LEAF

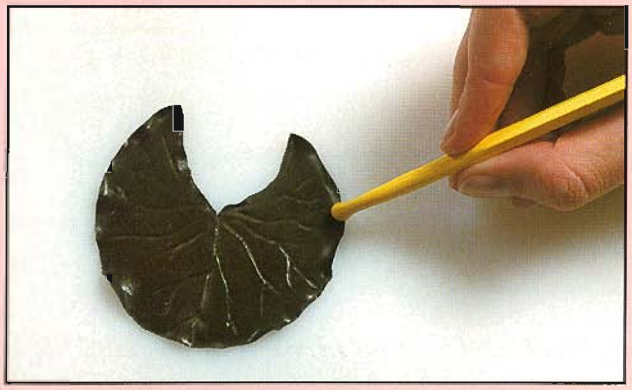




1 Creating the shape: Roll a piece of dark green-coloured flower paste out to about 3mm (⅛in) thick. Trace the template below on to a piece of greaseproof paper, then on to thin card.

2 Cutting out the leaf: Place the card template on the rolled flower paste and scribe the outline of the leaf. Cut round the scribed outline with a scalpel or a small, sharp-pointed kitchen knife.



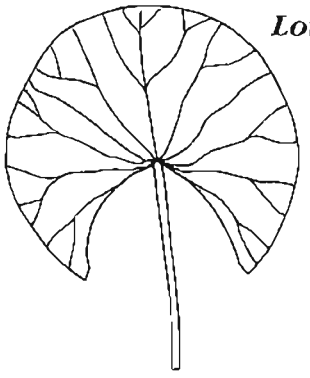


3 Adding the veins: Using a veining tool or a scriber, copy the veins marked on the template freehand on to the flower paste lotus leaf. Alternatively, you could press the leaf on to a plastic water lily leaf to mark the veins.

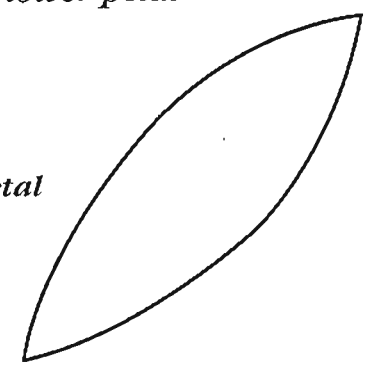
4 Shaping the edge: To create the wavy outline of the lotus leaf, use a bone tool to soften the edge at intervals all round. Leave it to dry, then brush the surface lightly with melted vegetable fat to give the leaf a healthy gloss.

Lotus blossom and leaf template

Lotus leaf



Flower petal



Bud petal

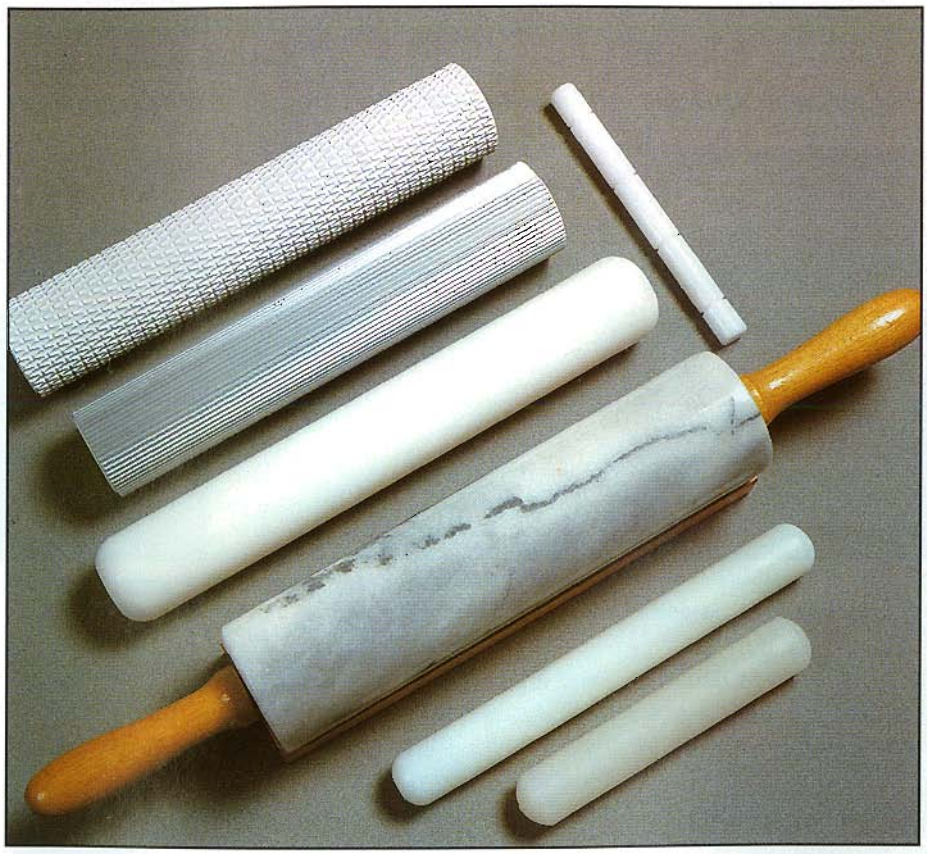
Enlarge as necessary

Sugarcraft rollers

A rolling pin is a lifelong investment, and should be treated with respect. Here we look at the advantages of different rollers so that you can choose the best for your work.

Once upon a time, there was just one basic wooden rolling pin, used to roll out the pastry and biscuits for afternoon tea. Some of you may even remember how, in some households, a milk bottle or other straight-sided glass bottle filled with cold water did duty for all the rolling-out tasks in the kitchen – from scones to the Christmas cake marzipan. This useful tool now has many variations, and few households today are without at least one rolling pin.

In sugarcraft, rolling pins play a very important part in stretching and levelling paste in preparation for coating the cake. Now that sugarpaste has become so popular with cake decorators, it is very important to be able to get a smooth, flat surface.



TRADITIONAL ROLLING PINS

Traditional wooden rolling pins can be obtained up to 40cm (16in) long, but the most common are about 30cm (12in) long. They are not always ideal for sugarcraft work, as they can, depending on the type of wood that has been used, sometimes leave a wood-grain pattern on the surface of the paste. Most rolling pins, however, are made from beech because it is a very smooth wood with little grain, and so does not split easily.

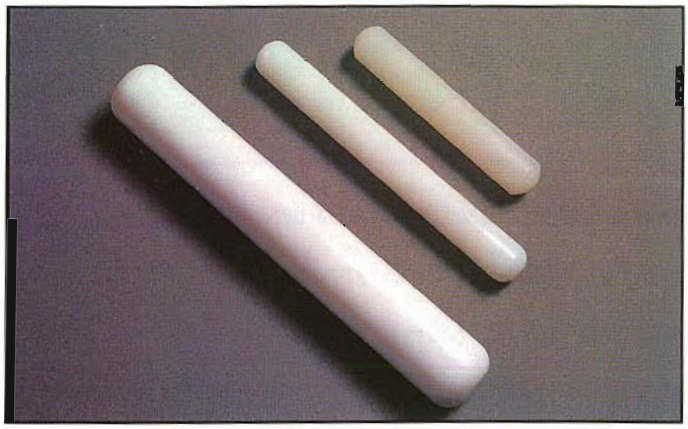
Cheap rolling pins usually just have a knob at each end to hold on to. Very superior pins have handles mounted on ball bearings so that they swivel, making the roller much easier to use. Take care to prevent the ball bearings from rusting by the occasional application of some lubricating oil.

Wood tends to warp if left in water too long, so wooden pins should be washed and dried immediately after using. On no account try to remove any food adhering to the surface with a knife or other sharp object. Once a rolling pin is marked, this damage will show on everything that is rolled out. Traditional rolling pins are also manufactured from marble. These leave a totally smooth surface, and are attractive to look at but are much heavier than the wooden variety.

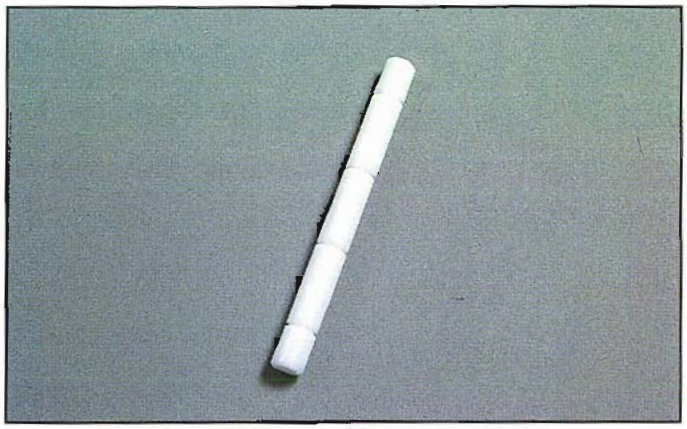
Rolling pins are also manufactured out of various other materials, but the most popular type available for sugarcraft are the non-stick polypropylene variety which come in different sizes and lengths. Use of the non-stick rolling pin minimises the amount of icing sugar that has to be used to roll out the paste. Less icing sugar means that the paste does not dry out and skin over quite as rapidly, and this is therefore very beneficial to the decorator who is moulding the paste over the cake.

CHOOSING A ROLLING PIN

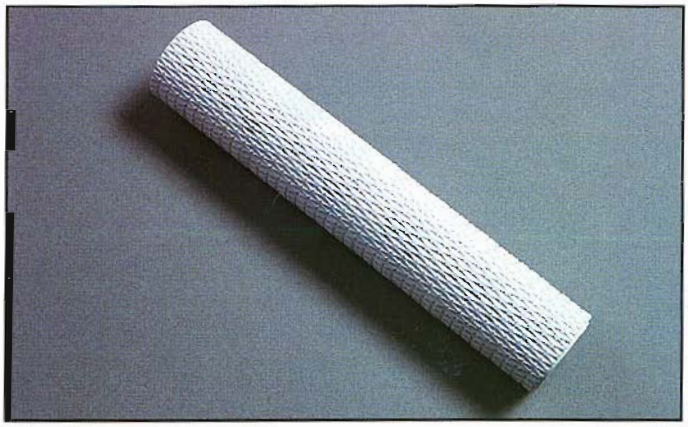
A rolling pin is an investment which will last for many years if treated kindly, so when choosing the length and style, have in mind the largest cakes



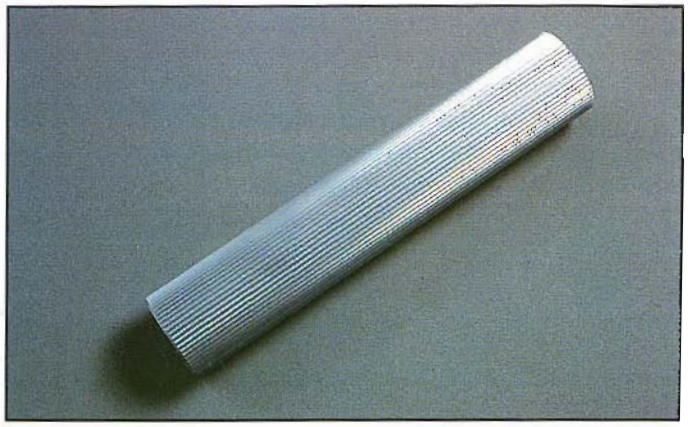
A selection of non-stick flower paste rollers.



A veining roller.



A basket weave roller.



A rib roller.

you may wish to decorate. Even if you only make these occasionally, a longer pin will still prove more effective with most cakes. Once the paste is rolled out, it can be used to lift and position the paste over the cake while holding each end.

Rolling pins are also needed for much smaller tasks. When making delicate sugar flowers, obviously a much smaller pin is required. These are also available in non-stick polypropylene plastic, and are about 2.5cm (1in) in diameter and 15-23cm (6-9in) long. Flower makers will find these rolling pins essential for really fine paste for their floral art.

The tiniest rolling pin used by the sugarcraft enthusiast is a cocktail stick; this is necessary for finishing a Garrett frill and for working on the edges of flower petals. Between this pin and the one mentioned above there is now a selection of rolling pins of differing lengths and diameters sold in specialist shops. Use of these depends on personal choice and how and where you have been shown the benefits of these tools. Different teachers work with their own favourite tools, which will in turn influence their students' choice.

PATTERNED ROLLERS

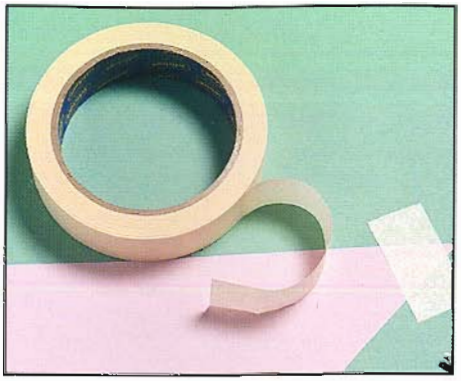
Specially patterned rollers have been in use in the bakery trade for many years. Often turned from brass or cast in metal, in a variety of styles, they are heavyweight rollers used for texturing paste into different patterns. These specialist tools are very expensive and not readily available to the domestic market.

There are still, however, many different varieties available. Sugarcraft manufacturers have produced excellent textured rollers, in both metal and plastic, mainly for making basket-weave patterns. You can create baskets of flowers or a pastillage casket. Rib rollers or smocking rollers are used to make straight lines in paste. They can be used simply for texture, or to create smocking patterns around the sides of a cake. You can also buy a smocking kit comprising a small rib roller and a pair of plastic tweezers for marking pleats.

PLAIN ROLLERS

Apart from the special rollers for making textures, which are supplementary sugarcraft tools, all cake decorators need a rolling pin to achieve a good. smooth coating on a cake. No amount of elaborate decoration can possibly disguise a bad surface, so it is well worth investing in a good rolling pin, and taking very good care of it.

ALL THE TERMS AND TECHNIQUES OF CAKE DECORATING



MASKING TAPE

Obtainable from both DIY stores and stationery outlets, masking tape is a low-tack adhesive strip which can be peeled off without damaging the surface below. It is ideal for taping down the paper holding piped designs, such as runouts or lacework, to prevent it curling during drying and spoiling the work, and for any other situations where you want to temporarily stick something in place.

MATURING FRUIT CAKES

A rich fruit cake tastes better if it is allowed to mature, rather than being eaten immediately after baking. About six to eight weeks is ideal, and even longer if there is any alcohol in the cake, as this acts as a preservative – some cakes can be stored for up to a year. To keep the cake moist, it must be wrapped in greaseproof paper, then stored in an airtight container, or enclosed in a sealed plastic bag or overwrapped with foil. Always keep it in a cool place.

MELON BALLER

This small implement is used to scoop out sections of melon in the form of a ball, to make decorative fruit salads. It is also known as a parisienne cutter. In cake decorating it comes in handy for shaping other fruit into balls, and can also be used to shape paste.

MERINGUE FROSTING

Frostings are cake coverings made from sugar and egg whites, often with added flavouring and colouring. Meringue frosting is one of the simplest, made with caster sugar, egg white, and cream of tartar. For an 18cm (7in) cake, put 180g sugar, one large egg white, and a pinch of cream of tartar into a bowl. Set over a pan of simmering water and whisk until the mixture thickens and stands in soft peaks. Remove from the heat and continue whisking until cool. Use the mixture immediately.

METAL STRAIGHT EDGE

This is used for smoothing royal icing across the surface of a cake. It is also called a royal-icing blade. Any metal ruler can be used, but for a big cake it must obviously be a long one. Do not use wooden rulers, which are too thick to give a completely smooth surface, or plastic ones, which are too light to hold the weight of the icing.

MEXICAN PASTE

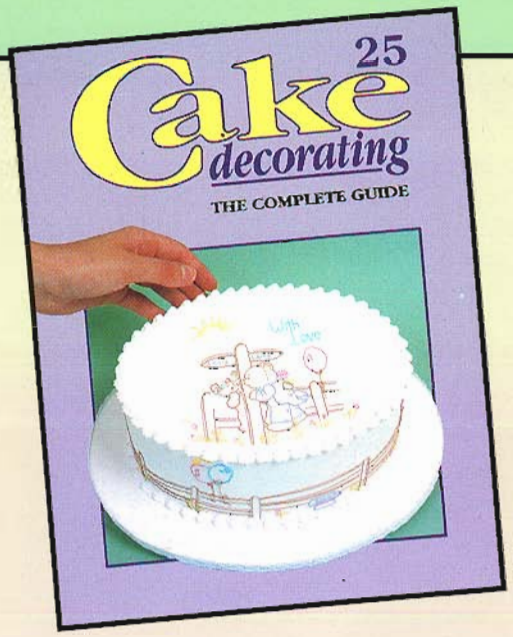
Used for making models and their clothes, Mexican paste is a good alternative to sugar paste as it rolls out thinly and is easier to mould. The name comes from its origins in Mexico, where celebration cakes adorned with figures are especially popular. To make one good-sized or several small models, sift 240g icing sugar and 3tsp gum tragacanth on to a work surface. Make a well in the centre and and add 1tsp liquid glucose and 2tbsp water. Mix the ingredients together, then knead to a paste. Store for a few days to allow the gum to expand.

MIMOSA BALLS

The tiny yellow flowers of the mimosa bush, fluffy and ball shaped, are used in cake decorating for designs where the sugarpaste equivalent would be too large. They are also available in a crystallized form.

MINIATURE CAKES

A perfect small gift, miniature cakes are precisely scaled-down versions of full-sized cakes, complete with decorations. Usually they are no more than 7.5cm (3in) high. Despite this, they require the same amount of care as a normal cake. To make them, cut several different shapes out of a standard square or rectangular sponge or fruit cake and decorate with small amounts of icing or paste, plus specially made or bought decorations, such as small flowers.



COMING IN ISSUE 25

Cake decorating

• Ideas • Techniques
• Tips • Skills

CLASSIC *cakes*
Lovers Lane

BRIGHT *ideas*
New Year clock

CAKE *craft*
Formers

DECORATING *know-how*
Simple tube embroidery

SECRETS *of success*
Airbrush techniques

FINISHING *touch*
Delicate crown ornament

A-Z *of cake decorating*

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